



PHASCOLOMYS LASIORHINUS, Gould

H.C. Richter, del et lith.

Walter & Cohen, Imp.

PHASCOLOMYS LASIORHINUS, *Gould.*

Hairy-nosed Wombat.

HEAD, OF THE SIZE OF LIFE.

THIS full-sized representation of the head of this new and highly interesting species of Wombat has been executed partly from a fine drawing sent to me by Professor M'Coy, of Melbourne, and partly from an example now in the Gardens of the Zoological Society. This living animal exhibits a fleshy muzzle, partially covered with fine white hairs, through which the pink flesh-tint shows very conspicuously. Mr. Bartlett, the superintendent, informs me that, after carefully comparing Professor M'Coy's drawing with the Society's animal, he has no doubt of its having been made from an example identical in species.

For further particulars respecting the *Phascolomys lasiorhinus*, the reader is referred to the interesting notes by Mr. Angas and Professor M'Coy, which will be found in the next page.



PHASCOLOMYS LASIORHINUS, Gould

A. Wolf and J. C. Richter, del. et lith.

Weller & Sohn, Leipzig

PHASCOLOMYS LASIORHINUS, *Gould.*

Hairy-nosed Wombat.

THE arrival in this country of two or three living examples of a species of Wombat with the very remarkable character of a hairy muzzle has naturally excited as much interest among our own naturalists as its recent discovery had done among those of Australia. Both Mr. Angas and Professor M'Coy have forwarded lengthened papers respecting it for publication in the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London,' and both those gentlemen were of opinion that the new Wombat was identical with the *P. latifrons* of Owen, who many years since had applied that specific term to a skull in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons in Lincoln's Inn Fields, but of which no skin had ever been received; and notwithstanding what I have said in my account of the preceding species, I should have considered that Mr. Angas and Professor M'Coy were correct in their conclusion, had not one of the animals sent to this country died, and thus afforded an opportunity of comparing its skull with that in the College Museum above mentioned. On this being done, it was found that the two skulls did not agree; and I believe I am at liberty to say that Mr. Flower, who has charge of the collection, is of opinion that they could never be considered as belonging to the same species. Under these circumstances, I had no alternative but to give the Hairy-nosed Wombat a distinctive specific appellation; and, at the suggestion of Dr. Sclater, I have assigned to it that of *lasiorhinus*. This course, however, will not prevent me from giving the remarks of my friends M'Coy and Angas, which indeed will have the more interest as descriptive of this new and extraordinary animal.

"I have lately," says Mr. Angas, "had an opportunity of examining a living full-grown male example of a Wombat, in the Botanical Gardens in Adelaide, which, on comparing it with adult specimens of the Tasmanian Wombat, I find to be quite distinct from that species."

"The fur of the latter is very rough and coarse, of a dark grizzly grey; ears quite small, blackish brown outside, whitish internally; nose nearly black, and more pointed than that of the former, giving to the face an expression slightly resembling the 'Koala,' whereas the other presents a bold, bull-dog-like aspect from the greater expansion of his face and width of nostrils. The general aspect of *P. Wombat* is more bear-like: in standing, it arches its back considerably, and does not hold its head so erect; the expression of the eye, too, is decidedly fierce, and lacks the good-natured twinkle of the South Australian species.

"The specimen in the Adelaide Botanical Gardens was caught some twelve months since near the Gawler River, about thirty miles north of Adelaide. It is kept in an enclosure, where it is secured with a strong chain and collar to prevent its escape by burrowing; it is perfectly docile, and never attempts to bite like the Common Wombat. It is fed on bran and weeds, and drinks freely of water. The only sound it emits is a short, quick grunt when annoyed; it sleeps a good deal during the day, rolled up almost into a ball, with its flesh-coloured nose buried between its fore paws; and appears impatient of heat and rain, as in its wild state it is entirely a burrowing animal, living in large holes in the limestone districts, and only leaving its habitation towards dusk for the purpose of obtaining food. It is fond of lying on its back like a bear, will burrow three or four feet into the soft ground of its enclosure, and scratches alternately with its fore paws. When worried, it presents its hind quarters to the enemy, and, suddenly turning round, makes a charge at his legs, evidently for the purpose of throwing him down; otherwise it is perfectly harmless. He runs fast for a short distance in a sort of gallop, but soon tires, and is easily caught. Although in some parts of the colony, especially on Yorke's Peninsula and about Port Lincoln, the holes of these Wombats are very numerous, yet the animals are but rarely seen. Many of the oldest colonists have informed me that they never saw a Wombat alive. The blacks on the Murray describe two kinds of Wombats: one (evidently *P. latifrons*) they speak of as 'big yellow fellow,' the other as being smaller and dark; they also say that the impressions of their feet in the sand-tracks leading to their burrows bear a striking resemblance to those of the footprints of a young child. The flesh they describe as being like pork, and excellent eating. They are extremely difficult to obtain, on account of their great timidity. The usual plan is to make a screen of boughs in the vicinity of their haunts, behind which the natives conceal themselves. If not killed on the spot, they will scramble to their holes, whence it is utterly impossible to dislodge them."—Proc. of Zool. Soc. 1861, pp. 268–271.

The following is Professor M'Coy's account of the animal examined by him in Melbourne:—

"As the description given by Mr. Angas in the 'Proceedings of the Zoological Society' for June 1861, of what he supposed to be the living *P. latifrons*, and as the first skin of this Wombat could only be identified with that species by an examination of the bones of the skull, which Mr. Angas had not seen, I felt much doubt as to the identity of his species and that of Professor Owen; and when, a few weeks ago, the Acclimatization Society of Melbourne received two specimens of a Wombat from South Australia of an

entirely different species from that of Tasmania or Victoria, I gladly embraced the opportunity of determining the species in the only way in which it could for the first time be done from the skin, namely, from an examination of the skull; and in this way I am able to furnish a description of the external characters of what I believe to be the *Phascolomys latifrons*. Mr. Angas not noticing the extraordinary character of the hairy muffle, I am quite uncertain as to what his species may really be. His differs from mine also in having the feet of the same colour as the body, instead of a rich brown.

“The two specimens examined were quite alike; both were males. Their general size and shape is somewhat like that of *P. Wombat*, but the body is considerably longer and narrower in proportion; the neck is also so much more slender that the animal may easily be confined by a dog-collar round the neck, which cannot be done with *P. Wombat*, from the neck being nearly as thick as the head. The head, instead of being broader, is narrower and deeper in proportion to the length of the body; the forehead is much more elevated across the eyes, forming a very obtuse but distinct angle with the line of the nose; but the most extraordinary difference in the character of the head is produced by the great width and flatness of the nose, which is covered with dense coarse white hair, and is much wider than high, instead of being narrow, black, naked, and longitudinally ovate. Another marked peculiarity is the great comparative length of the ears, which are long and elliptically pointed, differing remarkably from the very short rounded ears of *P. Wombat*. The general outline, too, of *P. latifrons* is rendered remarkably different by the broad, flat, oblique form of the body behind the crest of the hips, and the hair forming two circular rosettes on that part, uniting to form a short transverse crest across the back by meeting the ordinary hair of the back coming down in the opposite direction. The claws are shorter and broader than those of *P. Wombat*. The tail, also, instead of being a mere tubercle, is slender and cylindrical.

“The fur is totally unlike the coarse, harsh, densely adpressed fur of *P. Wombat*, being soft, and in length, texture, and feel resembling more nearly that of an English wild rabbit. It is closer on the feet and toes than on the legs, differing thus from the long bristly covering of the toes of *P. Wombat*.

“Upper part of head, back, sides, and legs brownish grey; a semicircular spot under the nostrils, one in front of the eye, a broad spot on the chin, the back of the ears, and the feet dark brown; the crest of the lower part of the back is dusky brown; the tail is blackish and naked; the under part of the body is whitish or dull grey, and the sides under the head ochraceous or yellowish; whiskers black, with a few white hairs; hairs on muffle silvery-whitish grey.

“From Mr. Angas omitting to notice the broad, white hairy muffle, and from the narrowness of the head and great width of the nostrils, I supposed the species I have above described would prove to be the *Phascolomys platyrhinus* of Owen, which seems to have been overlooked by most subsequent writers, but an examination of the skull proved the above-given description to belong truly to the *P. latifrons*; possibly Mr. Gould and Mr. Angas may have had *P. platyrhinus* under their eyes.”

It will be remarked that both Professor M'Coy and Mr. Angas consider the animal they respectively describe to be the true *P. latifrons* of Owen; and from an examination of examples received from South Australia, I have no doubt that the remarks of both gentlemen refer to one and the same animal: the omission of the hairy muzzle by Mr. Angas may have arisen from the hairs having been eroded in consequence of confinement, as is the case to a certain extent with the animal in our Gardens. With regard to the *P. platyrhinus* I may mention, that on a further examination of the skull in the Museum of the College of Surgeons to which that name has been applied, it so much resembles several skulls of *P. Wombat*, that it is questionable if it be really distinct.

While writing these remarks, another *Phascolomys* has just arrived at the Zoological Society's Gardens in the Regent's Park, which certainly differs from all the rest, its colour being uniform jet-black, even to the plated bare shield on the nose. It is allied to the *P. lasiorhinus* in its long pointed ears, which at once separates it from *P. Wombat* and the animal I have figured as *P. latifrons*. For this new species I propose the name of *P. niger*. Its native locality is unknown: can it be the dark animal spoken of by the blacks to Mr. Angas as inhabiting the Murray scrub?

In concluding these remarks, I must express a hope that mammalogists will adopt the names I have applied to the four species of Wombat. I admit that there is still some little difficulty as to the identity of the *P. latifrons* of Owen, whether it be or be not a species still unknown to us, or whether it be the animal I have figured under that name. I must also in fairness state that the skull of *P. lasiorhinus* sent to the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons for comparison appeared not to be fully adult; at the same time it exhibited so many striking differences from the skull to which the name of *P. latifrons* was assigned, that no anatomist would for a moment consider them to be identical; and we can scarcely suppose that the progress of age would produce so great a change in the character of the skull that ultimately they would be alike.

My figures were taken from a drawing made by Mr. Wolf, from the animal in the Zoological Society's Gardens, which was received from South Australia.